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## POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY.

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### THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIALISM ON ENGLISH POLITICS.

SOME few years ago, a well-known English politician and political economist is reported to have said that, whatever might be the case in Continental countries, socialism was impossible in England, and that any socialist propaganda there would prove a ridiculous fiasco. The remark seemed to suggest that insular habit of thought so often attributed to Englishmen, which presupposes an insurmountable barrier between Great Britain and the Continent. But whether that was so or not, the remark was unfortunate in view of the very striking socialistic development which has since obtained in England. Probably no person equally well-informed would venture to make a similar observation at the present time. For good or for evil, the socialist movement has obtained something more than a foothold in England, while British legislation partakes more and more of the nature of quasi-socialist enactments. To so great an extent is this the case that an amiable and estimable peer, Lord Wemyss, recently called attention in the House of Lords to the spread of socialism, and charged both political parties with pandering to it in their legislation. The most eminent English thinker, Mr. Herbert Spencer, has also been moved to take up his parable against socialism in a little volume entitled *The Man versus the State*. And quite recently no less important a person than Sir William Harcourt exclaimed, in the House of Commons, "We are all socialists now." No one supposes that Sir William Harcourt uses the term "socialist" in the same sense as Marx used it or as it is used by any socialist

party in any civilized country. By socialism Marx meant the collective ownership of the instruments of production ; while by the same term Sir William Harcourt probably signifies the regulation by law of the relations between those who own those instruments and those who work at some fixed wage or pay a competition rent to the owners. And no doubt this distinction is real and important. But it remains to be seen whether such an admission of the doctrine of "ransom" as Professor Sidgwick has recently sanctioned in the *Contemporary Review*, or the regulation of rents by the state as in Ireland under the Gladstone land act, will not ultimately tend to that further and more complete socialism which is advocated by the collectivist party. The present paper proposes, however, not so much to discuss this interesting question as to consider briefly the actual course of English political development and to elucidate the present condition of things in Great Britain. Are Lord Wemyss, Mr. Spencer, and Sir William Harcourt correct in their diagnosis, or was the above-mentioned political economist right in saying that socialism was impossible in England ?

The word socialism has perhaps merited its claim to be one of the great words of the modern world by reason of the different constructions which may be put upon it — just like the words liberty and Christianity, which also are used in the loosest possible way. The word socialist is used here in its strictest economic sense. A socialist is one who believes that the necessary instruments of production should be held and organized by the community, instead of by individuals or groups of individuals within or outside of that community. There may be infinite differences of opinion as to the way in which that result should be brought about ; there may be an indefinite variety of connotations and inferences concerning the bearing of the new economic doctrine on religion, marriage, the family and so forth. The adoption of socialism may involve fundamental changes in the whole structure of our social life ; but with all this, for the time, we have nothing to do. Nor can I concern myself with the respective merits of anarchic and collective socialism, as preached, for example, by Bakunine and Krapotkine on the one

hand or by Marx and Bebel on the other. These are interesting questions but are not relevant to the issue ; for Bakunine and Krapotkine believe in collective ownership of the instruments of production just as truly as Marx and Bebel, though they differ as to methods and organization. Nor do I propose to note the conflict between those who would take the socialist commonwealth by violence and those who would introduce it gradually by constitutional methods. The creed of economic socialism is independent of all these questions of methods and tactics, and may be held by men who are at daggers drawn as to ways and means. The socialist, then, for my purpose, is one who would transfer gradually or otherwise, by direct or indirect means, the ownership of the instruments of production (land, mines, telegraphs, railways, machinery, banks of issue) from individuals to the community. And the questions we have now to ask and answer are : Is England becoming in this sense socialist, or is socialism in this sense possible or impossible in England ? And further : Have any recent movements helped to bring about any marked change in the course of public thought and of public legislation ?

And first we must observe that interference by legislation with "private enterprise" has been steadily increasing in England during the last seventy years. The *zenith* of the *laissez-faire* theory was attained about the beginning of the present century, ever since which it has declined until it is now practically abandoned. Early in the century England was engaged in the most gigantic of her many wars—a war carried on by a great commercial minister for preëminently commercial ends. The real character of the struggle between Pitt and Napoleon has been largely lost sight of, owing to a cloud of vague phrases about patriotism, liberty, and religion. No doubt there came ultimately an issue between Napoleonic despotism and European liberty. But Pitt himself was under no illusions. He cared little or nothing for the picturesque corruptions and historical traditions which appealed to the imagination of Burke. Pitt started as a reformer, imbued with the doctrines of Adam Smith, and a reformer he remained in intellect even while he

was giving his immense talent to the service of reaction. In theories of commercial legislation he was far ahead of any contemporary statesman, and he believed all along in a reformed Parliament and in religious liberty. Pitt never backed up the Continental coalition against France for the sake of "altar and throne." He had a much more tangible object in view, *viz.* : to secure for his country undisputed commercial supremacy. His aim was to complete the edifice begun by William III and the Whigs of 1688 and continued by Walpole and Chatham. One of the chief meanings of 1688 was the transference of the government into the hands of the moneyed class. It was the period of the formation of the national debt and the Bank of England; and under Pitt the classes interested in the national debt and the Bank of England became supreme in the state. The borough-mongers and the rich Indian nabobs possessed themselves of Parliament, and the "old nobility" was swamped with successful contractors and wealthy fundholders. The capital controlled by this class was used by the ideal statesman of the class to secure the supremacy of the class. The policy of *laissez faire* was the special invention of that class.

At the same time a new class, that of the manufacturers, was rising into power. The inventions of Arkwright and Crompton date from the latter half of the eighteenth century, during which period England's great cotton manufacture grew to imposing proportions. Aided by the new machinery, by an abundant supply of minerals, by England's insular position, and by the genius of the people for industry, the manufacturing class became powerful; and those ugly places, the large industrial towns of England, began to grow to an enormous size. The English manufacturers were originally protectionists, as witness the Irish commercial legislation and the general colonial policy which they supported. But as soon as their position was secure, it was obvious that they would become free traders and advocates of *laissez faire*; and the subsequent free-trade legislation of Peel marked perhaps the culmination of their power.

But the reign of *laissez faire* was soon challenged — and why?

Because of the growth of machine industry, the consequent displacement of labor, and the new discomfort and dislocations which had arisen. The horrible cruelties of the early factory and mine system in England have been laid so fully bare by official documents that any attempt to tell over again the tale of horror is superfluous. The foundations of England's industrial greatness were cemented by the blood of the English working classes. But apart from the cruelty perpetrated, two other results connected themselves with the new era. The question of the "unemployed" arose as the direct result of machine industry; and the tendency of wages towards a minimum manifested itself in the absence of any organization on the part of the workers. Obviously *laissez faire* was an impossible policy; society simply could not hold together on any such basis. The attacks made on machinery by starving weavers may have been very foolish; but the weavers saw clearly that in some way or other the new machines had altered their position, had rendered life harder for the many, and employment more precarious. It was impossible to permit the new industrial relationship to be uncontrolled. Thus English statesmen abandoned *laissez faire*, not because of any abstract theories about the functions of the state, but simply because they were compelled by the pressure of facts. The first of a long series of enactments for the protection of labor was passed in 1802: it was the beginning of the end of *laissez faire*.

But it is commonly assumed that the whole Liberal and Radical movement in England has been essentially a movement having for its watchwords, liberty, absence of state regulation, freedom of contract. Is this so? What may be roughly termed the Liberal movement in England has its origin in three distinct schools. (1) There were those Whigs who adhered to Fox and who regarded with friendly eyes the proceedings of the French revolutionists up till the time of the September massacres, and who even after that date wished well to the French republic. This class was never large, and it was demoralized by the temporary withdrawal of Fox from

Parliament. (2) There was, next, the small Benthamite school (to use a convenient phrase), of whom Price and Priestly were active apostles, whose doctrines are summed up in Godwin's *Political Justice*, and whose Nestor was the venerable Jeremy Bentham. This school of political thought was clearly affiliated to that of the French *philosophes*; its members were ardent and zealous reformers, thoroughly imbued with the critical ideas of the eighteenth century, and believers in the "perfectibility of the species." (3) There was also the popular school, which derived its main inspiration from Thomas Paine, and whose leaders and orators were Cobbett, Cartwright, and Hunt. This school was of the rough and ready order: its members did not speculate very deeply, but they saw clearly the abuses under which the country was suffering, and they were honestly desirous of improving the condition of the people as well as vehemently opposed to the court, the aristocracy, and the church. If any one man can be said to be the father of popular English radicalism, Thomas Paine is that man: his mark is upon it to-day. All these three schools went to the making up of the English progressive movement of the earlier part of the century. Can it be said that a party thus composed was favorable to *laissez faire*?

The truth is that the movement was of a complex character, having diverse and even contradictory aims. Some of its leaders were mainly interested in getting rid of abuses, others in affirming new political ideas. Some wanted to make a bonfire of old statutes and to abolish laws restricting freedom of speech, publication and worship. The politics of Bentham and Godwin were certainly favorable to that creed of "administrative nihilism" for which Mr. Spencer now stands sponsor. But the popular side of the movement was even then dominated by quite different aims and had a distinctly socialistic tinge. Cobbett inveighed against the fundholders and the debt; Thomas Spence of Newcastle published his able and interesting scheme of land nationalization; Robert Owen was preaching theoretic and practising actual socialism. It is a fundamental error to suppose that English radicalism was originally a new creed as

to political machinery: it had a social doctrine, however ill formulated. And with respect even to such a writer as Godwin, it must be remembered that his *Political Justice* was written before the effects of machine industry had become visible. Like the French declaration of the Rights of Man, it was not so much a prophecy of the new era as a summing up of the old: it represented the logical issue of a free individualism under simple economic conditions, rather than the necessary political results of the new system of collective industry.

The various groups were united so long as all were equally opposed to Tory rule; but the Liberal reaction of 1830 and the compromising legislation which followed had the effect of breaking up this unity. The Whigs forgot their reforming zeal in the delights of office; literary radicalism of the so-called philosophic order got into the hands of writers like James Mill, who had little else to offer but a series of negations; and the popular radical movement merged into Chartism.

An adequate history of the Chartist movement has yet to be written. In every way it was, as Carlyle perceived, a movement of deep importance. While it put forward a distinctly political programme, it had undoubtedly ulterior social and economic aims. This may be gathered from a study of the speeches and writings connected with the movement, especially those of Ernest Jones and Bronterre O'Brien. It was the only genuine, earnest, serious popular movement in England since the days of the Commonwealth. It was an absolutely English creation, due in no sense to foreign initiative, and it was environed by a quasi-socialistic atmosphere. Its authors desired to gain political power in order to improve the condition of English working-men.

Had the working classes been enfranchised and had no competing programmes been set before them, Chartism would certainly have triumphed, and the subsequent course of English politics would have been widely different from what it has been. But neither of these conditions obtained. The working classes were not in possession of the suffrage, and a new factor came



into the field in the shape of Cobdenism, or *Manchesterism*, as the uncouth tongue of Germany has it.

I have said above that, when they felt their ability to compete in the world's market with success, it was natural that the English manufacturers should be friendly to *laissez faire*. That they were so is shown in their support of Cobdenism. The movement directed with such sagacity by Cobden was essentially a middle-class, business-men's movement. Its triumph signified the supremacy of the manufacturer. Cobden himself, as quoted in Mr. John Morley's biography (chapter 13), asserted that his aim was to make the middle classes absolute masters of the state; and he temporarily succeeded in doing so. That Cobdenism should ever have been regarded as a "popular" movement, that free trade should ever have been supposed to be a "popular" victory, can only be attributed to one of those hallucinations which are stronger and more enduring in politics and religion than in any other departments of human affairs. It is certain that neither the aristocracy nor the working class leaders so regarded it. The latter perceived that their Chartist movement was beaten by the free-trade middle-class movement, — a fact also noted by Emerson,<sup>1</sup> who was sojourning in England at the time, — and they have not recovered their position even to this day. The Cobdenite victory is easily explained. The Cobden school came to the front at a time when the old Whiggism was dying out. It had able men at its head, a simple programme of a highly practical character, and it was able to draw to an unlimited extent upon the immense revenues of the manufacturing class behind it. It appealed moreover to a middle-class electorate. Thus armed, Cobdenism stormed successfully the citadel of liberalism and held it for a whole generation. It is this quite natural (but entirely misleading) identification of Cobdenism with the progressive movement in England which has induced people to suppose that English radicalism means mere absence of restriction or "administrative nihilism." It means nothing of the sort. Cobdenism was an intruder in the line of legitimate succession; and we shall see directly that the

<sup>1</sup> J. E. Cabot, *Life of Emerson*, II, 527.

radicalism of to-day is taking up the thread of the Chartist movement.

While the let-alone policy was triumphing in the legislation of Huskisson and Peel and the agitation of Cobden, immense inroads were being made in the theory of individualism by the factory legislation. That legislation was brought about by two causes: (1) the unwearied devotion of zealous philanthropists, chief of whom was the late Lord Shaftesbury; and (2) the attempt of the landlords and the "country party" to retaliate on the free-trade manufacturers. The bitterest opponent of the new legislation was Mr. John Bright, the spokesman of the manufacturers. Peel's personal bias was on the side of the capitalist class, but he was compelled to give way and make terms with the philanthropists. Just as the net result of free trade in corn was to cut many slices off the rents of the landlord class, so, from an economic point of view, the net result of the factory legislation was the cutting of slices from the profits of capital, which under unrestricted competition would have gone into the pockets of the employers, but which were now diverted into the general channels of the whole working community.

Now, for convenience, let me sum up the conclusions hitherto arrived at, *viz.*: that the era of capitalist rule began at the revolution of 1688 and extended with increasing power till after the beginning of this century; that the foreign policy of this era was conducted in the interests of capitalists; that *laissez faire* was erected into a supreme political dogma at the close of the last and beginning of the present century; that statesmen were obliged to abandon *laissez faire* as a working policy; that the reforming party in England, though composed of varied currents, was in the main bent on social and economic as well as political change; that, owing to certain intelligible causes, the main current of this movement was for a time diverted into the channel of Cobdenism; but that, at the very period when the Cobden school secured their triumph, *laissez faire* received a severe check, due partly to philanthropy and partly to political tactics, in the factory legislation. The middle-class doctrine of *quicquid non movere* may be said to have lasted till the death

of Palmerston in 1865. Though Cobden was a bitter enemy of Palmerston in foreign policy, yet in commercial and financial legislation Cobden's ideas obtained during the Palmerstonian era. The first Gladstone budget in 1853, the repeal of the navigation laws, the French treaty, the repeal of the paper duties were all emphatic assertions of the supremacy of free-trade ideas, as was also the abandonment of protection by Disraeli and the Conservative leaders. During this period the working classes were quiescent politically, but the skilled section of them concentrated their attention during this time of political apathy on their trades unions, hoping to accomplish by pressure exerted through them what the Chartists had hoped to secure by political power. It is impossible within these limits to treat of the trades unions; but it may be said generally that it is the Chartist idea and not the trades-union idea which is again coming to the front. The English trades unions have done a useful work for a section of the English working classes; but their task is now mainly accomplished. Within a few years the numbers represented at the annual trades-union congresses have fallen by more than one-half, and there are few of these bodies which are now in a flourishing condition as regards either membership or funds. The culmination of trades-unionism may be dated about 1874, when some of the trades-union leaders first secured seats in Parliament, and when the complete legal recognition of trades unions was wrung from a Conservative government. Simultaneously with the culmination of trades unions among operatives came the beginning of combination among agricultural laborers; but internal quarrels and outside economic pressure have rendered this latter all but powerless. Thus the purely middle-class régime came to an end (the year of Palmerston's death curiously coinciding with that of Cobden), and the period of proletarian pressure began; or rather, to be more strictly accurate, the pressure which had been felt to some extent from without, now manifested itself within the political parties to a far greater degree. The security of the ballot was given to the working classes; legislation on social questions became much more frequent and

advanced in its tendencies ; and, above all, a state system of public education was adopted with the consent of both parties. The so-called Conservative reaction of 1874 was due in a far greater degree to Liberal quarrels and divisions than to any new manifestation of genuine conservatism. That there was really no reaction against state interference was proved by the acts of 1875 providing for artisans' dwellings and for the full recognition of trades unions, by the merchant-shipping legislation of the same year, and by the extension and completion of the system of compulsory education in 1876. The Disraeli administration accomplished very little in domestic legislation ; but what it did accomplish was certainly in the direction of public intervention between capital and labor, nominally, if not practically, in the interests of labor.

This tendency towards quasi-socialistic legislation became much more manifest under the Gladstone administration of 1880 ; for two of the most important measures of the very first year of the new government were severe blows to the *laissez-faire* theory. These were the Irish compensation for disturbance bill and the employers' liability bill. The former measure, it is true, was lost through the action of the House of Lords ; but this does not lessen its importance as an indication of the socialistic tendency of Liberal legislation. During the Gladstone régime the functions of the post office were also greatly enlarged by the adoption of the parcels-post system, whereby "private enterprise" has been greatly checked. The electric-lighting legislation and the claim asserted by the government over the telephones also mark the same drift towards collective control and ownership.

What are the functions, then, with which we find the British government invested at the present time, at home and in its Indian dependency ? The government has rendered popular education compulsory ; it has truck acts to regulate payment of wages, mines-regulation acts, factory and workshop acts interfering at every point with the liberties of the capitalist, adulteration acts, and acts to compensate workmen for injuries due to their employers' neglect. The telegraphs have been

acquired by the state, and the functions of the post office have been so enlarged that, besides sending and delivering letters, it now despatches telegrams and is a common carrier and banker on an enormous scale. The British state has now 150,000 persons in the direct service of the community in purely civil employment. The municipal bodies have also extended their functions. Municipalities now own public parks and gardens, museums, picture galleries, libraries, baths, washhouses, technical schools, gas and water works, cattle markets, street railways, concert halls, piers, harbors, dispensaries, hospitals, and artisans' dwellings; and in many towns as, for example, Glasgow and Edinburgh, the municipality is the owner of a vast area of house property. By recent legislation, the municipalities are empowered to acquire land to be let by them as allotments to laborers and others. Moreover, under the British government, localities can provide for themselves farms, irrigation works, bathing establishments, and can deal in guano, salt, opium, quinine, *etc.* The state in England at this moment provides, for every one needing them, midwifery, nursery, education, board and lodging, vaccination, medicine, public worship, amusements, burials, and carriage of goods and money. All this of course means that the state, either in its national or municipal capacity, has been gradually absorbing what were private functions; and this under a restricted suffrage, and despite the immense dead weight of individualism left behind by the Cobden school. England is indeed leaving the days of *laissez faire* far behind.

But nothing has helped on the new socialistic movement in English politics more than the Irish land legislation. The late Arnold Toynbee said that by his Irish land act Mr. Gladstone had committed the Radical party to socialism. But Mr. Gladstone has done much more than commit his own party to a new path of political experiment; he has committed the entire community. Conservative statesmen may and do regret this fact, as Lord Salisbury lamented in the House of Lords; but, instead of reversing it, they go forward in the same path. Had the principle of *laissez faire* been maintained, in place of the land

act of 1881 we should have had the Cobdenite ideal embodied in some measure which would have made the land of Ireland as salable as a ship or a horse. The control by the state would have been relaxed. But by the Gladstonian land legislation the land of Ireland is to-day absolutely under state control. Rent is fixed, not by contract, but by a state tribunal acting on evidence laid before it. Slice after slice has been taken from the landlords' rent, until, by a decree of the land commission, in December, 1887, rent to the extent of hundreds of thousands of pounds sterling was knocked off by one stroke of the pen. This is due to public pressure, to the influence of the unconscious socialism which operates on the minds of the Irish people, and to the pressure of economic fact. Conservatism protests against this innovation, but in vain: it is compelled, when in office, to carry on the same policy, to resist in 1886 and to yield in 1887. This shows that the policy is no mere capricious act, but the joint product of steady popular pressure and hard economic fact. Mr. Gladstone legislated in 1881 as he did because he could not help it: his successors have followed reluctantly in his steps because they could not do otherwise.

Now when Mr. Gladstone brought in his Irish land bill of 1881 he said that his legislation was exceptional and was intended for Irish consumption only. He said just the same of his Irish church legislation in 1869. But Ireland is the Nemesis of the English governing classes. The country which for centuries they ruined has turned and begun to ruin them. Ireland affords a precedent for the rest of the United Kingdom. The disestablishment of the Irish church in 1869 gave an immense impetus to the disestablishment movement in England, Scotland, and Wales. The Irish land movement, which in its origin was of a distinctly socialist character, and the legislation which it has wrung from Parliament have given an even greater impetus to the land movement in these three countries. Land agitations of a precisely similar character to that of Ireland are in full blast in Scotland and Wales. It would take very little to set the Scottish Highlands in a state of active revolt. In Wales tithes are collected by the military at the point of the bayonet.

Even Conservative politicians admit that "something must be done" in both countries. That "something" will not be Cobdenite "free trade in land": it will be state interference between owner and cultivator. Landlords and clergy will be gradually expropriated, and rent and tithe will be absorbed by the community and appropriated to public purposes.

In England, for various reasons, things do not move quite so rapidly, but the tendency is the same. The land question in England is much more of a town movement than a question of agricultural land, owing to the steady surging of the population into large towns. This brings up the question of public ownership of parks and open spaces and above all the question of ground rents. The feeling of all classes against the great ground landlords of London, who absorb millions of rent without rendering one single service of any kind in return, is growing in intensity every day. When trade was flourishing and wages were high, people did not trouble themselves much about this condition of things. Consequently even John Stuart Mill failed in 1873 to rouse the public mind on the subject of "unearned increment" through the medium of his Land Tenure Reform association. But now that wages are low, work scarce, the numbers of the unemployed swelling every year, competition keener, the struggle for life more and more severe, the old indifference is being dispelled; and were it not that London is so huge and amorphous, and consequently so difficult to organize, the agitation against the ground landlords would by this time have become of an exceedingly formidable character. Discontent against what is vaguely called "landlordism" is being widely felt, quite independent of party ties.

This feeling is producing its effect on both political parties. English politicians as a rule are comfortably ignorant of political economy: they do their work by rule of thumb. We must not expect, therefore, to find any well-considered economic theory obtaining in either party; but what we do find is that the Liberal party has made up its mind to tax ground rents and mineral royalties, to support the extension of municipal allotments, and to apply the principles of the Irish land act in Scot-

land and Wales. Liberals have lost the land-owning members of their party (who have become either Tory or Unionist) and they are now free to join in the Irish cry against "Landlordism." The party has not yet made up its mind to treat land definitely as public property and to expropriate all private owners, but it is tending that way, and that is the view held by not a few of its most active workers. There can be no doubt that the writings and propaganda of Mr. Henry George produced a distinct impression on the Liberals of Great Britain, though no Liberal convention would yet be prepared to endorse publicly the state appropriation of competition rents. But the old Cobdenite doctrine of free trade in land is manifestly falling into the shade, and the taxation of land values and the interference of the state between landlord and tenant are now fully accepted articles of the Liberal creed. The Conservative party too has, in its so-called Tory-democratic wing, adherents of these doctrines; but the party as a whole is of course less advanced. It will resist these innovations at first, and then, after a severe struggle, will gradually yield and throw overboard its landlord Jonah (as it already has done in Ireland) to save its vessel from the threatening ocean of democracy. At any rate such a forecast seems probable in the light of the history of the last half century.

In the light of this quasi-socialistic movement in the Liberal party, a word on the "home-rule" question may not be out of place. American readers are apt to regard the Irish question as a mere affair of local self-government, a matter of political machinery, and so forth. But the more thoroughly one goes into the Irish question, the more clearly one perceives that this is not the case. That the majority of the Whigs of the last century were friendly to Grattan, while the small Whig residuum of the present day is even more bitterly hostile to the Irish movement than is the Tory party, should afford ground for reflection on the change that has come over the Irish movement in recent years. The movement of Grattan was a constitutional Whig movement, sanctioned by so conservative a statesman as Burke. The present movement is a social movement which



concerns itself not only with self-government but with property. The fate of a mere political movement in Ireland may be inferred from the collapse of the Young Ireland party of 1848 with its vague aspirations and crude methods. To the political aims of 1848 the founders of the Land League added tangible social and economic aims: they proposed to secure the land of Ireland for the Irish people. Now it is the Whig section in England, combined with what may be termed the rump of Cobdenism, which has most clearly perceived this fact, that the Irish were aiming at social and economic revolution; and it is the representatives of these parties to-day who are the most vigorous opponents of the Irish movement. This was admitted by the ablest leader of the group, Mr. Goschen, in a striking speech delivered at a banquet in London in December, 1886, in which he clearly laid down that he and his friends were combating what was practically a socialistic movement. This, therefore, is the true secret of the vigorous opposition in England to home rule: it is the opposition of the propertied classes. And it is important, as emphasizing this fact, to observe that the Irish movement was the occasion and not the cause of the Liberal split. That split was certain to come in any event. Had the Liberal chiefs definitely decided to take up what was termed the "unauthorized programme" put forward at the election of 1885, and which included the graduated income tax and the municipalization of land, the split would have been even more serious. It was the entering wedge of the socialistic movement which was really responsible for the temporary collapse of the Liberal party. Moreover if we consider, more carefully than English partisans can afford to do, Mr. Gladstone's attitude on the Irish question, we shall see that he really tried to temper the wind to the shorn Whig lamb in a way that the "unauthorized programme" would not have done. For he proposed, first, to pledge English credit to buy out the Irish landlords; and, second, by the institution of a property qualification and a second order, to make the Irish government thoroughly aristocratic in its composition. History will cite the refusal of the landlord and Conservative party to close with Mr.

Gladstone's offer as a striking illustration of the short-sighted folly of conservatism. Mr. Gladstone would have given a kind of home rule plus lavish compensation to landlords: it is now probable that there will be democratic home rule with nothing more than prairie value. But the dispossession of Irish landlords by an Irish legislature must lead to a consideration of two further questions — the questions, namely, of the laborers in Ireland and of the mortgagees. What will an Irish legislature say to these problems? It is not difficult to see that Irish laborers may fare worse under small farmers than under large landowners; and it is certain that the mortgagees of Irish land will press as heavily on the landlords as the landlords have pressed on their tenants. An Irish legislature would thus find itself face to face with a gigantic social problem, and though there is less conscious socialism in Ireland than in almost any other civilized country, it is difficult to see how an Irish parliament could solve the problem thus forced upon it in any other than a socialistic sense. This then is what the English anti-home-ruler fears: he cares not so much about the mere fact of an Irish legislature (to which indeed at the beginning of the fight several prominent Unionists did not object under certain conditions), as about the legislation which such a body would enact and the precedents it would set for the rest of the United Kingdom. In this connection it may be pointed out that the coercive policy of the Salisbury ministry is not so much directed against the political as against the social movement in Ireland. The members of Parliament and others arrested and imprisoned have been specially those who advocated boycotting and the "plan of campaign." Thus we see that the opponents of home rule are really fighting against social revolution, against incipient socialism; and the most vigorous of these opponents are not the Tory rank and file, but the Whig landlords and the small band of doctrinaire adherents of *laissez faire*.

And now let us consider the *solidarité* between the Irish movement and the new force which is beginning to operate on the English Radical party — a *solidarité* none the less real because quite undreamed of by most Irishmen. The socialist

movement in England is about eight years old. In 1880 was founded a small body called the "Democratic Federation," which, in 1883, prefixed the word "Social" to its title and became an avowedly socialist body. At the end of 1884, it experienced the inevitable fissure which sooner or later splits all bodies of advanced reformers in twain, and the "Socialist League" arose. A little prior to this, a small number of educated socialists formed the "Fabian Society," which differed from the other two bodies in that its members proposed to adopt the policy of Quintus Fabius dictator, *qui cunctando restituit rem*. These three bodies are very small; it is doubtful if their numbers amount to a couple of thousand all told; but there is no room for doubt as to the influence they have exerted and are exerting on active politicians and on a section of working-men. While there are few definite socialists in England, there is much unconscious socialism, especially in London; and this is due mainly to the very energetic propaganda carried on in workmen's clubs. Ten years ago individualistic secularism of a hard and unimaginative order reigned in these places; to-day they are pervaded by a more or less socialistic spirit. The change is so striking that none acquainted with these proletarian institutions can fail to recognize it. The working classes of England are not nearly so intelligent or impulsive as those of France; and therefore what socialism there is is vaguer in England than in France and does not prompt to such decisive and logical action. But it is there, and it is beginning to affect the skilled workmen. Though the trades unions are on the whole somewhat conservative, it is noteworthy that for the last five years the address from the chair at the annual congress has been of a more or less socialistic character; while the active socialistic campaign is largely carried on by skilled workmen, such as engineers and compositors. At the congress held this year at Bradford, a resolution was carried by an overwhelming majority in favor of the nationalization of land; another resolution demanded direct labor representation in Parliament; while a resolution favoring an eight hours' working day would have been carried had it not been for certain complications

into which it is impossible to enter here. Thus we see that the socialistic principle as against the let-alone principle is making way rapidly among English skilled workers. That this is in large measure due to the socialist propaganda may be inferred from the fact that it follows almost immediately on the formation of an avowed socialist organization in England. This is really a case of *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*. In England the function of revolutionary socialism seems to be similar to the function of unitarianism in religion: it has few positive adherents, but it leavens very powerfully the political thought around it.

More important, however, than the resolutions of trades-union congresses is the actual legislation which Parliament is compelled to take up. There is scarcely an eminent politician in either house of Parliament who does not dilate to his audiences on the virtues of self-help; but the same men, when they come to deal with the legislative problems actually before them, are constantly calling into being new state powers, are constantly extending state functions, are perpetually interfering with "freedom of contract," are forever directing the hands of the legislative Briareus towards the multitudinous industries and enterprises which, half a century ago, were left to regulate themselves. Such a chronic state of legislative activity, perpetually increasing, is surely no accident. It points to an ever-growing collective control over the industrial life of the community.

But further, there are problems before England which are likely to be solved in a socialistic sense, and thus to hasten the socialistic development of the country. These are specially four: (1) the large tracts of land going out of cultivation and the consequent perpetual decline in agricultural rent; (2) the rehousing of the great mass of the unskilled working classes; (3) the revelations as to the sweating system recently made before the special committee of the House of Lords; and (4) the question of the permanently unemployed. It is difficult to see how these questions are to be solved on individualistic lines. Even that optimist statistician Mr. Giffen,

after attempting to prove that people are better off than they ever were, expresses his conviction that "something like a revolution" in the condition of the people is desirable. But such a revolution can be brought about only by the state, *i.e.*, by the people in their corporate capacity. Individual effort cannot rebuild East London and house a million working people as they ought to be housed. Individual effort cannot prevent overtime work in government establishments, on railways, in street cars and omnibuses, and so give occupation to the unemployed. Individual effort cannot take hold of and cultivate the land of England, nor can it prevent the ground landlord from absorbing his "unearned increment" out of the industry and enterprise of the people. It is perfectly obvious that all these problems will demand the aid of the state in their solution, and it is equally obvious that such state action will bring society a very long way on in the socialist direction.

And now let us look for a moment to the attitude of the political parties with regard to the social problem and to their probable respective programmes; and we shall see, I think, that both parties, while repudiating socialism, yet advocate such measures as will lead on to socialism and can be logically defended only on something like socialistic grounds. The Conservative party will rely in the main on schemes of state-assisted emigration, on protection, on the exclusion of foreign labor, and probably on some compulsory insurance scheme borrowed from the Bismarckian system. Although the Conservative leaders fight shy of protection, nearly every one of their followers is a protectionist at heart; and the recent sugar-bounties convention is a sign that even the timid leaders of the party will go some way to gratify their followers. To the exclusion of foreign labor nearly every Conservative candidate in London and the large towns will be committed at the next election. As for the emigration scheme, the people do not take very kindly to it, and all acute politicians will be careful not to commit themselves too far in that direction, and the same may be said of any state insurance scheme. But to these things, in some form, the majority of Conservatives will adhere. And be it observed that each

and all of these schemes involve collective action for the supposed benefit of the people. The state will do something that the masses may have work to do and bread to eat. In other words, it is the collective, the socialist, not the individualist method which conservatism will adopt.

Much more decidedly socialistic will be the Radical programme. Radicals will not send the people out of the country at the public expense, but will supply public money to settle them on the land. They will propose to tax ground rents and mineral royalties with a view to their absorption by the community. They will municipalize land and nationalize railways. As soon as the organized working-class vote demands it, they will shorten the hours of labor and interfere further with the capitalist in the working of his business. And it is probable that, under the new and almost revolutionary extension of local self-government, they will start public works for the relief of the unemployed. It need not be pointed out that every one of these measures would involve a vast increase of collective authority and would be an immense step in the socialist direction.

The conclusion, then, to which the logic of facts drives any competent and well-informed investigator into English affairs is that in no country, probably, is progress being made more rapidly and more certainly in the socialist direction. When one compares the labor legislation of Great Britain, passed even under middle-class rule, with that of France or Belgium, one feels that the former country is in these matters half a century ahead of the two latter. It is so because the industrial development of England is half a century ahead of that of either France or Belgium, and the great lesson of politics is that legislation is determined by the economic and social conditions of the time. The economic development of Great Britain is further advanced than that of any other country; and therefore it is that Great Britain leads the world in socialistic legislation. And, if it be not a paradox to say so, it is that very socialistic legislation which prevents in England the wilder developments of revolutionary socialism with which the world is familiar in the case of France and Germany. It is rather the orderly evolutionary so-

cialism of Rodbertus than the more revolutionary socialism of Marx (identical as the doctrines of each may be at bottom) which has a fair prospect of development in England.

One other matter needs to be dwelt upon. Englishmen are rightly supposed, all the world over, to be devoted to individual liberty; and the superficial student of socialism supposes that under it all individual liberty is lost and that every one is merely the agent of a huge central bureau. If this were the only kind of socialism possible, it might be freely admitted that it would have no chance in England. But he is blind to the signs of the times who does not perceive that a vast movement of decentralization is going on in England. The Irish demand for home rule, the cries from Scotland and Wales for some reasonable autonomy, the concessions made even by a Conservative ministry in the local government bill, and the certain extension of that measure which the next Radical government will make—all these are indications that Great Britain is being prepared for a kind of socialism wholly different from the authoritative centralizing methods of Marx,—a socialism consistent with and in fact dependent on an energetic local life and compatible with all kinds of local form and coloring. If, for example, the land in England is made public property, it will not be through a great central rent-receiving machine at Whitehall, but rather through the localities, each of which will be as free as is consistent with the union of the whole. Some kind of centralizing there must indeed be: some kind of uniformity is inseparable from the modern industrial system so far as one can see. And there is no greater monotony or uniformity or absence of individual free play than in the modern factories with which industrial England is crowded. It may well be, indeed, that under some rational socialistic system individual liberty may actually extend in various important directions, even if it should be contracted in others.

The immediate political future of England is exceedingly problematical. It is a period of chaos and bewilderment. The old parties are undergoing vast changes, fundamental questions are being asked, and probably the next few years will exhibit

rapid, shifting scenes of a kaleidoscopic character. During this time of change the labor party will, unless I am greatly mistaken, take form and develop itself, make and unmake ministries, and gradually acquire more and more control over the springs of government and the sources of national power. The politicians will bid for the labor vote as they have bid for the Irish vote: indeed, it is the startling success of Mr. Parnell which has so profoundly influenced the leading workers and thinkers in the labor ranks. Mr. Parnell has made Parnellites of the Liberal party: we shall see the leaders of both parties anxious before long to do whatever the labor leaders may require.

WILLIAM CLARKE.